

Message Text

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AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 17577

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XH

SUBJECT: "EAST EUROPE MONTH" IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

1. SUMMARY. NOVEMBER WILL BE "EAST EUROPE" MONTH IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. THIS IS NOT ABNORMAL: THE POST-HELSINKI QUARTER OF 1975 WAS ALSO MARKED BY A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY IN SOVIET-EE RELATIONS, AND THERE IS A PLETHORA OF ISSUES (SOME VISIBLE, SOME NOT) CALLING FOR RESOLUTION (OR IRRESOLUTION). WHATEVER THE "NATURAL AGENDA," HOWEVER, TWO GENERAL FEATURES OF THIS MONTH'S SOVIET-EE PROGRAM ARE WORTH MENTION. FIRST, THE SOVIETS WORK HARDER ON EASTERN EUROPE WHEN THE PACE OF THE EAST-WEST BUSINESS SLACKENS, AND THIS COULD BE HAPPENING NOW. SECOND, IT WILL BE
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"BALKAN MONTH" EVEN MORE THAN "EAST EUROPE" MONTH PER SE, AS THE SOVIETS TOUCH BASES IN ALL THREE SOUTHEAST

EUROPEAN "SOCIALIST" CAPITALS. BY THE END OF NOVEMBER, BREZHNEV WILL HAVE ASSOCIATED HIMSELF AND THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WITH THE STATUS QUO IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA, AS WELL AS WITH GIEREK. WILLY-NILLY, HE MAY THEREBY BE PROVIDING THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO THIS YEAR'S AMERICAN PUBLIC DEBATE ON EAST EUROPE'S ROLE. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE RISK OF POINTING A FINGER AT THE OBVIOUS, IT MAY STILL BE WORTHWHILE TO NOTE THAT EASTERN EUROPE'S MONTH IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY THIS YEAR HAS ALREADY BEGUN. NOVEMBER WILL HAVE SEEN HUSAK PRESENTING HIS MEDALS TO BREZHNEV; GROMYKO VISITING ZHIVKOV IN SOFIA; GIEREK IN THE USSR ON HIS FIRST FULL OFFICIAL STATE-PARTY VISIT; BREZHNEV IN BELGRADE AND THEN IN BUCHAREST FOR HIS FIRST FULL BILATERAL SUMMIT WITH CEAUSESCU (ANNOUNCED IN PRAVDA NOV 9); AND, IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, THE FIRST MEETING OF THE WARSAW PACT POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE SINCE 1975, AT BUCHAREST.

3. NONE OF THIS IS ABNORMAL EXCEPT IN PACE AND SCALE. THE LAST QUARTER OF 1975, AFTER HELSINKI, WAS ALSO A PERIOD OF BRISK ACTIVITY IN SOVIET-EE RELATIONS, WITH FULL FRIENDLY VISITS TO MOSCOW BY HONECKER AND HUSAK., HUNGARIAN PREMIER LAZAR'S INTRODUCTORY CALL, AND THE MEETING OF WARSAW PACT FOREIGN MINISTERS (ALBEIT NOT BILLED AS SUCH) IN DECEMBER. SO THERE IS AMPLE PRECEDENT FOR STORMING IN SOVIET-EE RELATIONS EVEN IN RECENT TIMES. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED, IN FACT, TO SEE HONECKER AND KADAR MAKE SOME GESTURE OVER THE NEXT MONTH EQUIVALENT TO HUSAK'S, OR EVEN TO SEE ZHIVKOV SEEK A HIGHER PROFILE THAN HIS MEETING WITH GROMYKO AND ATTENDANCE AT THE BUCHAREST PCC MEETING WILL HAVE GIVEN HIM. (A MOSCOW ZNANIYE SOCIETY LECTURER SAID OCT 21 THAT A MEETING WITH ZHIVKOV WAS PLANNED, AND THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY TELLS US A PLANNED MEETING IN SOFIA WAS MOVED UP TO ACCOMMODATE FAHMI, SO THERE MAY BE MORE TO COME FOR BULGARIA.)

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4. SIMILARLY, THERE IS NO DOUBT A HOST OF BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES FOR RESOLUTION (AND IRRESOLUTION) AT THESE MEETINGS. SOME HAVE ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING AND ANALYSIS: THE SOVIET APPROACH TO POLISH POLITICS AND ECONOMIC NEEDS; THE QUIDS AND QUOS OF SOVIET-ROMANIAN RELATIONS; INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE WARSAW PACT, AND THE QUESTION OF EAST EUROPEAN DEFENSE OBLIGATIONS; CSCE AND MBFR; RELATIONS WITH WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS. OTHERS WILL ONLY BE IDENTIFIABLE WITH THE PASSAGE OF

TIME: INTRA-COMMUNIST POLITICS ARE CONDUCTED UNDER A BLANKET OF SECRECY, AND THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR SURPRISES. (THE SUGGESTION THAT THE HUNGARIANS MAY BE THROTTLING BACK TALK ABOUT TRANSYLVANIA AFTER CEAUSESCU'S VISIT TO MOLDAVIA, FOR EXAMPLE, IS INTUIGUING.) TO A LARGE EXTENT, THE SUBSTANCE OF THESE MEETINGS WILL IN FACT BE BUSINESS AS USUAL.

5. FROM THE STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW, NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE TWO FEATURES OF THIS MONTH'S SOVIET FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE WORTHY OF MENTION.

6. FIRST, THE SOVIETS TEND TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO EASTERN EUROPE IN PERIODS WHEN THE PACE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS IS SLOW, AND THIS IS ONE OF THEM. IT MAY WELL BE TRUE, AS IZVESTIYA'S NOV 4 LEAD EDITORIAL REVEALED (TO US AT LEAST), THAT THE SOVIET POLITBURO DEVOTES "FIRST-RANK," ATTENTION TO RELATIONS WITH THE "SOCIALIST COMMUNITY." IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THE MALAISE IN POLAND IS THE MOST WORRISOME DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SOVIETS IN THIS AREA IN SOME YEARS. THERE IS CERTAINLY A "NATURAL AGENDA" FOR NOVEMBER. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS PRACTICALLY CERTAIN THAT IF EAST-WEST RELATIONS WERE FULL OF LIFE AND SUBSTANCE (OR ONLY SOUND AND FURY) THE SOVIETS WOULD BE SPENDING MORE TIME WORKING WITH THE WEST, AND LESS IN WORKING ON THE EAST.

7. SECOND, NOVEMBER WILL BE "BALKAN MONTH" EVEN MORE THAN "EAST EUROPE MONTH" FOR THE SOVIETS. DESPITE
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HUSAK'S MEDALA AND GIEREK'S ARRIVAL, THE CENTER OF GRAVITY OF THE SOVIET AGENDA WILL BE THE EAST EUROPEAN SOUTHERN TIER: SOFIA, BELGRADE AND BUCHAREST FOR BOTH THE BILATERAL SUMMIT AND THE MULTILATERAL PACT FINALE. BY THE END OF THE MONTH THEY WILL HAVE TOUCHED BASES IN ALL THREE BALKAN "SOCIALIST" CAPITALS.

8. ONLY THE COURSE OF THE VISITS THEMSELVES WILL PROVIDE FIRM EVIDENCE FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN INTENTIONS AND RESPONSES. ALREADY, HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE TO POSTULATE THAT, WHATEVER OTHER BUSINESS IS CONDUCTED, BREZHNEV WILL HAVE ASSOCIATED HIMSELF AND THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WITH THE STATUS QUO IN EASTERN EUROPE AND, EVEN MORE STRONGLY, IN ITS BALKAN HALF. THROUGH THE DEVICE OF FULL STATE-PARTY VISITS, HE WILL HAVE LAID HANDS FOR THE FIRST TIME ON GIEREK AND CEAUSESCU, AND REITERATED THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE THE SOVIETS ATTACHE TO THE BREZHNEV-TITO NEXUS AS THEY

LOOK TO THE FUTURE OF THE SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS.
WHATEVER THE CONTENT, THE FORM OF THIS MONTH'S
ACTIVITIES WILLY-NILLY REINFORCES SOVIET COMMITMENT
TO THE CURRENT BALANCE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN THIS
AREA. AND, WE WOULD SUGGEST, IT THEREBY CONSTITUTES
A KIND OF SOVIET RESPONSE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC
DEBATE ON EASTERN EUROPE OVER THE PAST YEAR.

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